

# CALIFORNIA

## OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

### REFUSE COLLECTORS

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2002

INTEREST AREA  
MECHANICAL - SKILLED OCCUPATIONS



### WHAT DOES A REFUSE COLLECTOR DO?

REFUSE COLLECTORS, also known as Garbage Collectors and Trash Collectors, operate garbage or recycling trucks on assigned routes. They either pick up garbage for deposit at transfer stations or recyclable materials for deposit at existing recycling sites. Most Refuse Collectors work alone in automated trucks, driving the truck and using a hydraulic lift to pick up and dump trash containers. However, there are still Refuse Collectors who must continue to manually lift and dump

containers into older style trucks, working either alone or in Driver/Collector teams of two. According to the California Refuse Removal Council, about 20 percent of garbage trucks did not have automatic or hydraulic lifts in 1999. However, this number is declining rapidly as older vehicles are replaced with automated models.

Refuse Collectors perform the following tasks:

- Empty bins and return them to curb side using hydraulic lift or own physical strength.
- Tag containers to inform customers of overflowing containers or rejection of unsuitable waste.
- Describe the standards for proper disposal to customers.
- Sometimes move garbage containers to trucks.
- Inspect mechanical and safety gear on trucks daily.
- Report mechanical problems.
- Fill out any needed reports for defective equipment.
- Keep informed of road and weather conditions.

Both Driver and Collector may team up to empty large garbage bins in apartment complexes and commercial disposal sites.

### WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Refuse Collectors use the following skills, knowledge, and abilities:

- Operation and Control – Control operation of equipment or systems.
- Time Management – Managing one's own time and the time of others.
- Static Strength – Able to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry objects.

- **Control Precision** – Able to quickly and repeatedly make precise adjustments in moving the controls of a machine or vehicle to exact positions.
- **Mechanical** – Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, benefits, repair, and maintenance.
- **Geography** – Knowledge of various methods for describing the location and distribution of land, sea, and air masses including their physical locations, relationships, and characteristics.

### WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Work has greatly improved for Refuse Collectors who drive trucks that feature hydraulic lifts. They rarely have to leave their truck cabs and enjoy air conditioning and heating devices to ward off extreme weather.

Those who still work in trucks without hydraulic lifts manually lift containers weighing between 40 and 100 pounds into the truck, or sometimes roll refuse bins that weigh as much as 800 pounds from the commercial site to the truck. These workers may also encounter unpleasant weather conditions since they must leave their truck frequently. Sometimes they must fend off dogs or avoid devices installed to keep intruders out of garbage containers.

While most Refuse Collectors wear protective clothing provided by the employer, they still get dirty. Foul odors, dust, and pests such as ants and flies may be part of a day's work. Workers are occasionally exposed to different hazards including chemical burns, disposable needles, broken glass, falling objects from overloaded containers, and the diseases that may accompany solid waste. Risk is greatly reduced through health and safety training and the proper use of masks, gloves, and goggles. The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requires companies to give health and safety training to workers before they begin work.

This occupation appeals to those who wish to work independently in an outdoor setting.

### Union Membership

Refuse Collectors who work for local government may belong to unions.

### WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department's Labor Market Information Division:

Estimated number of workers in 1998:	11,200
Estimated number of workers in 2008:	11,000
Projected Growth 1998-2008:	-1.8%
Est. openings due to separations by 2008:	4,300

*These figures do not include self-employment.*

Job growth in this occupational field is declining due to the increased automation of garbage and recycling trucks, which requires fewer workers. However, 4,300 openings are expected between 1998 and 2008 to replace workers who retire or leave the job for other kinds of work.

### Trends

Curbside collections of recyclable materials are on the rise in metropolitan areas, which may generate more Refuse Collector positions in coming years.

### WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

#### California Earnings

##### Refuse Collectors 2001 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$12.09	to	\$20.42
Average hourly wage	\$16.04		
Average annual wage	\$33,372		

*Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.*

### Hours

The majority of Refuse Collectors begin work at 3:00 a.m. There is often overtime which carries the workday into late afternoon or early evening. Overtime wages are usually time and one half, with holiday pay at double time. Some municipalities and private companies offer bonuses for safety and productivity.

### Benefits

Common benefits are vacation and sick leave, retirement plans and medical, dental, vision, and life insurance. Some Refuse Collectors get uniforms or uniform allowances.

## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

### *Education and Training*

Drivers must have a valid California Class B Commercial driver's license and have a good driving record. Medical exams are part of the qualification requirements to get a Commercial Driver's License. Drivers must take an annual medical exam to keep their license. Most employers also give pre-employment medical exams and may require mandatory drug testing prior to employment.

Refuse Collectors must read, write, and speak well enough to complete necessary paperwork and communicate with customers. On-the-job training is from two weeks to a month.

Knowledge concerning the safe handling of hazardous materials is a plus for job seekers. Once hired, many firms give health and safety training as part of their orientation.

### *Licensing and Certification*

There are no licensing or certification requirements for Refuse Collectors.

### *Continuing Education*

There are no continuing education requirements for Refuse Collectors.

## HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Garbage Collection or Waste Disposal. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBS<sup>SM</sup> at [www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov) or at America's Job Bank at [www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us).

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at [www.calmis.ca.gov](http://www.calmis.ca.gov). Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office [www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm](http://www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm) or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, [www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop](http://www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop).

## WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

With seniority, Refuse Collectors can promote to Refuse Route Supervisors, Transfer Station Supervisors, or Pick Line Supervisors. Some Drivers move into related local trucking and dispatching operations.

## OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

California Refuse Removal Council,  
Northern District  
1121 L Street, Suite 505  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 444-2772  
Fax: (916) 442-0623

California Refuse Removal Council,  
Southern District  
333 City Boulevard West, Suite 705  
Orange, CA 92868-2924  
(714) 634-8050

Employment Projections by Occupation  
[www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm)

Employment and Wages by Occupation  
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

## RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Bus Drivers	No. 2
Truck Drivers, Heavy	No. 255

## OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

**SOC** (*Standard Occupational Classification*)  
Refuse and Recyclable  
Material Collectors 53-7081

**O\*NET** (*Occupational Information Network*)  
Refuse and Recyclable  
Material Collectors 53-7081.00

**OES** (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)  
Refuse Collectors 98705

**DOT** (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*)  
Garbage Collector Driver 905.663-010  
Garbage Collector 955.687-022